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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

# STUDENT MARRIAGE: SELF-ESTEEM, LOCUS OF CONTROL, AND SEX-ROLE ORIENTATION

by

DIANE D. JOHNSON

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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## ABSTRACT

Thirty-one married and 33 single female undergraduate students at the University of Alberta who were between the ages of 20-25 completed three questionnaires: the Internal-External Locus of Control Scale, the Self-Esteem Scale, and the Bem Sex-Role Inventory.

Results indicate that there were no differences between the married and the single groups in locus of control, self-esteem and sex-role orientation. There was also no difference in the relationships found between these three variables for the two groups. These findings suggest that marital status might not be a means of differentiating selected personality characteristics and the relationships between these characteristics for a normal-aged female undergraduate student population. The results of this study stand in contrast to other research findings in which comparisons between married and single students along these dimensions have been made.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

Goldscheider and Waite (1986) describe marriage as being perhaps the most crucial decision young people make as they become adults, since marriage "is the clearest transition from childhood to adulthood, and it conditions to a great extent the patterning of adult roles" (p. 91). Most undergraduate university students postpone marriage until after their university education has been completed. A minority of students, however, decide to marry prior to completing their undergraduate studies. Given that marriage has been identified as being such a powerful determining force in the lives of young adults, it seems plausible that there might be differences between those undergraduate university students who marry prior to completing their undergraduate studies and those undergraduate students who remain single throughout their university education.

The personality correlates of those students who decide to marry prior to completing their undergraduate studies are the focus of this research. Specifically examined are the self-esteem, locus of control, and sex-role orientation parameters as these variables relate to the young married female undergraduate student.

### Background to the Problem

Some researchers have examined the lives or characteristics of those students who have married while still in university (Falk, 1964; Lutes, 1981). The past research on married student personality has often looked exclusively at male students (Hepker and Cloyd, 1974; Jensen and Clark,1959; Lantagne,

1959; Medalia, 1962; Riemer, 1947; and Samenfink and Milliken, 1961). Many of these studies focused on the relative academic achievements of students who married while they were in university and students who remained single during their university studies. A few of the past researchers examining married students have included female subjects; however, these students made up only a small percentage of the sample. Chambliss (1961), for example, examined 366 married students registered at a state university. Of these students, only 59 were female. More recent data regarding female married students has often focused on older women students who are either coming to university for the first time, or who are in graduate or doctoral programs, and on their struggles to balance the often conflicting demands of home, family, school and community responsibilities (Berkove, 1979; Gerson, 1985; Lewis, 1983; Scarato and Sigall, 1979; Van Meter and Agronow, 1982). There is a decided lack of research available at the present time, however, which focuses explicitly on the experiences or characteristics of young married female undergraduates.

Hence, the findings of past studies which focus upon married students may not be generalizable to the young married female group. An example of how the experiences of other married student groups may differ from those of young married female undergraduates is found when comparing the results of research conducted by Coombs and Fawzy (1982) with that done by Kelner and Rosenthal (1986). Coombs and Fawzy (1982) studied stress in medical students, and the effect of marital status on the amount of stress experienced. The subjects in this study were all in their early twenties, and were primarily white males; being married was found to be a significant stress reducer for

these subjects. Coombs and Fawzy describe the life of the married male medical students in their sample as follows:

> Married students. .. enjoy daily contact with accepting, sympathetic persons who encourage them in their work, rejoice in their successes, and stand by them despite their failures. It is understandable that single students sometimes envy classmates who can come home to a spouse who cares, or as one student expressed it, "someone who has dinner ready for you, rubs your back, provides a shoulder to cry on at any hour, and builds you up when you are down" (p. 1492).

Following upon the research conducted by Coombs and Fawzy, Kelner and Rosenthal (1986) studied married female interns and residents and their spouses to see if marriage had the same, stress-reducing results for female students as it had had for the male students in the previous study. They discovered that while both males and females saw marriage as a positive experience "the supportive function of marriage appears to be stronger, however, for males than for females" (p. 23). The spouses of female medical students provided more instrumental, task-oriented type of help, and less emotional support and nurturing than did the wives of male students. The female experience also differed from the male students in that their spouses were more demanding: Their husbands had greater expectations of them for companionship, emotional support, and task sharing. The contrasting results of the two studies give credence to the argument that the experience of being married and a student may differ between the genders. It could also be posited,

based on these results, that the findings of research studies focusing on one married student group may well not be applicable to other married student groups.

As was mentioned previously, specific studies focusing explicitly on young married female undergraduates are lacking. However, two conflicting views as to what their experiences and characteristics might be like can be put forth, based on relevant literature. The less optimistic view points to marriage prior to the completion of university studies as being possibly detrimental both to marital and to educational success, and by implication, to self-esteem. Other sections of the literature, however, suggest that marriage may act as an enhancer of self-esteem and/or as a "buffering agent" against life stress.

The argument suggesting that early marriage might be harmful to young female undergraduates is based on the findings of a number of demographic and sociological studies. Booth and Edwards (1985) point to early marriage in general as being the best single predictor of divorce. One explanation for the greater marital instability of those who marry at earlier ages is termed exchange theory. According to this theory "early-marrieds" have more alternatives available to them other than staying married than do members of older couples, and they have fewer of the external pressures which may serve to keep the marital partners of later married couples together. The major alternative to staying married for members of early-married couples is finding another mate, since there are more potential mates still available to each member of the marital pair if they divorce at an early age than there will be at a later point in time. Some of the external pressures which may keep later-married couples

from being as likely to divorce include having children and having acquired financial assets together as a couple. Since in the early years of marriage these pressures are not as relevant, it becomes more likely that those who marry at an early age will ultimately divorce (Bahr, Chappell and Leigh, 1983; Booth and Edwards, 1985; Maneker and Rankin, 1985).

The above information points to the likelihood that those young women who marry prior to completing their university studies will have a greater risk of marital instability. An additional problem associated with early marriage is also singled out in the literature. Lowe and Witt (1984) point out that although "marriage has long been popularly considered the crowning achievement for young women" (p. 694), it has a negative effect on their educational attainment: Marrying prior to the completion of college lessens a woman's likelihood of attaining a college degree. The findings of Bayer (1969) concur with this statement. When discussing the relationship between educational aspirations and marital plans, Bayer concluded that women feel compelled to choose one at the expense of the other.

In summary, the less optimistic view regarding young women who marry while still in undergraduate studies suggests that the effects of this early marriage are twofold: a) a greater risk of marital instability or divorce; and b) a lowered level of educational attainment. This would seem to indicate a bleak forecast for those young women of normal college age who marry while still completing their undergraduate studies, a forecast which by implication points to a lowering of psychological well-being. However, other findings within the literature concerning women and marriage suggest that marrying while in

university may actually have two main positive effects for women: a) a higher self-esteem; and b) the provision of a buffer against stress.

Bardwick (1971) states that for women, "intimacy issues, the capacity to establish and sustain meaningful, important, nondestructive, intimate relationships become the major goal and the most important crisis during adolescence and the college years" (p. 209). If Bardwick is correct, then having attained a satisfying intimate relationship with a member of the opposite sex should provide a young woman with a positive sense of self-esteem. A study conducted by Long (1983) would seem to confirm Bardwick's hypothesis. Long found that undergraduate college women who had "steady boyfriends" had significantly higher levels of self-esteem than did college women without steady boyfriends. Bardwick (1971) suggests that women who marry while still in university may have a "best of both worlds" scenario in terms of self-esteem, since they have both "settled a sense of identity" (p. 153) in terms of achieving an intimate relationship, and have perhaps married husbands who have accepted their ambitions and abilities. Research done by Ortman (1976) comparing married and single community college students adds credence to the idea that married students might have higher levels of self-esteem relative to their single counterparts. Ortman found that the married students in his sample had higher levels of self-acceptance than did the single students.

Thus, one possible consequence of young women marrying while still in university may be a heightened sense of self-esteem. One may infer from the literature that marriage may also serve as a buffering agent against life stress. According to this argument, married students often experience more stress

because of the additional life changes (role changes, status changes, and more time pressures) that they have lived through (Staats, 1982). However, these additional stresses are neutralized by the close relationship they enjoy with their spouses. The marital relationship apparently offers more of an effective buffer against stress than the single students have at their disposal (Eaton, 1978). Young married female undergraduates may thus in fact have two advantages over their female single student peers: they may have a higher level of self-esteem resulting from having achieved an intimate relationship with a male; and their marriage relationship may provide them with an effective screen against day-to-day stresses.

## Need for the Study

As has been discussed above, literature which focuses specifically on the characteristics and experiences of young married female undergraduate students is presently lacking. Two hypotheses about what the characteristics and experiences of these students might be like have been described. One of these hypotheses is that married female undergraduates would have a lessened sense of psychological well-being relative to their single female university student counterparts, since early marriage in women has been found to be related both to marital instability and to lower educational attainment. If this is the case, then young married female undergraduates may be putting both their marital and their educational success at risk by combining the roles of wife and student.

Young married female students constitute only a minority of the total university student population. Given the minority status of these students on

the campus, and the lack of specific information about their characteristics which is presently available, it is possible that special needs that married female undergraduates have have not been adequately addressed by university administrators, instructors, or counselors. Since these students are a possible "at-risk" group in terms of marital stability and academic achievement, it is important to gather information about them, so that their special needs, if any, can be identified and met. This study fulfills this information-gathering function.

Specific Variables of Interest for the Study

No study has as yet examined locus of control, self-esteem and sex-role orientation in a married female student sample. These three variables have all been identified in the literature as worthy of research consideration. Prociuk and Lussier (1975), for example, point out that "internal-external locus of control continues to be widely recognized as an important personality determinant of behavior" (p. 1325). Rosenberg (1965) noted that the extensive amount of research involving self-image concepts both in the past and at the present time indicates that self-esteem is a personality variable to consider. Bedeian and Zarra (1977) justify the need to study sex-role orientation by saying that "it is generally recognized that socialized sex-role stereotypes with their associated values influence individual self-conceptions" (p. 712). Previous authors have also highlighted the need for research which looks at the variables of locus of control, self-esteem and sex-role orientation in combination: Harrison, Guy and Lupfer (1981), for example, state that research

looking at these three characteristics "deserve(s) greater attention" (p. 1186). Marecek and Frasch (1977) write that:

> the pattern of adult roles likely to be experienced by today's young women is quite different from the pattern of roles held by women in the past. This new pattern of roles require different personality characteristics and behaviors than those traditionally associated with femininity (p. 132).

An understanding of the characteristics and attitudes of young women at the present time is needed, however, before the different characteristics and behaviors required by these new role patterns can be made explicit. Studying the locus of control, self-esteem and sex-role orientation of young married undergraduate women would help to provide some of this information.

## Statement of the Research Questions

The present study was developed in response to the two deficiencies within the research literature which have been highlighted above: a) the lack of information available focusing explicitly on young married female undergraduates; and b) the lack of research completed which looks at locus of control, self-esteem and sex-role orientation in women in combination. The focus for the present investigation was the following basic research question: Do female students who are of the usual university age but who marry prior to completing their studies differ from single female students of the same age group along the dimensions of locus of control, self-esteem and sex-role orientation? A brief review of the relevant research literature, a description of the methods and procedures used in collecting and analyzing the data, a

summary of the findings of the study, along with a brief discussion of the limitations of the study and the possible implications of the findings for practice and research, are presented in the chapters hereafter.

## CHAPTER TWO

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Hereafter, a brief review of the literature most relevant to the present study is offered. The three main variables that were used in the study are defined, some of the past and current research which has been conducted using these variables is summarized, some specific problems or inconsistencies that exist within this literature are alluded to, and, finally, specific hypotheses for the study are offered as postulated.

### Definitions

#### Locus of Control

Rotter (1966) described locus of control as being a unidimensional and stable personality variable. The concept of locus of control is based on the idea that people, through the process of social learning, acquire over time generalized expectations as to how their reinforcements are controlled (Ashkanazy, 1985; Rotter, 1966). Individual differences in generalized expectancy of reinforcements can be conceptualized in terms of a continuum (Ashkanazy, 1985). The people who have a belief in external control are at one end of the continuum; they see reinforcements as being independent of their actions, as controlled by powerful others, by chance, or as being unpredictable due to complex forces (Rotter, 1966). Those having a belief in internal control are at the other end of the continuum. Such persons with a belief in internal control view reinforcements as resulting from their own relatively permanent characteristics or from their own behavior (Rotter, 1966).

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a construct found within both psychoanalytic and other personality theories (Silber and Tippett, 1965). It has been defined as being the "feelings of satisfaction a person has about himself which reflect the relationship between the self-image and the ideal self-image" (Silber and Tippett, 1965, p. 1017). According to self-image theorists, the greater the correspondence between the actual concepts the individual has about himself or herself (the self-image) and the way the individual would like to be (the ideal self-image), the higher the amount of self-esteem (Cohen, 1959; Silber and Tippett, 1965). Characteristics of high self-esteem individuals include a liking or valuing of themselves, and a tendency to view themselves as being competent in their dealings with the world (Fitch, 1970). Low self-esteem individuals, in contrast, have been characterized as being self-rejecting, dissatisfied with themselves, and perceiving themselves as incapable of dealing effectively with their environments (Fitch, 1970; Rosenberg, 1965).

Sex-Role Orientation

Sex-role orientation has been defined as "the balance of masculine and feminine personality traits within the individual" (Prager, 1983, p. 159). Stereotypically feminine characteristics, often referred to as expressive traits, include passivity, submissiveness, being interested in others, warmth, empathy, tenderness and nurturance (Harrison, Guy and Lupfer, 1981; Marecek and Frasch, 1977). Stereotypically masculine characteristics, in contrast, have been termed instrumental, and include being manipulative, being analytical,

being objective, having a greater interest in things than in people, being assertive, and being competent (Harrison, Guy and Lupfer, 1981).

Masculinity and femininity have traditionally been regarded as the opposing ends of the same continuum (Bem, 1974). Using this conceptualization, the two possible sex-role orientations for individuals are feminine or masculine. In recent years, however, the argument has been made that masculine and feminine characteristics are not necessarily mutually exclusive, although many people may, in fact, be stereotypically masculine or feminine in their personality traits (Bem, 1974; Bem, 1975; Bem, 1977). Psychological androgyny, which consists of incorporating both female and male characteristics into a single personality, has been presented as an additional sex-role orientation (Abraham, Feldman, and Nash, 1978). There are thus, three possible sex-role orientations for individuals: masculine, feminine, and androgynous (Bem, 1974; Bem, 1975; Bem, 1977).

## Research Conducted Using Locus of Control, Self-Esteem and Sex-Role Orientation

A variety of research studies have used locus of control, self-esteem, and sex-role orientation as variables. The studies summarized here represent the past and current research studies using these variables which are most relevant to the present research, which compared married and single female undergraduates along these dimensions.

Locus of Control and Sex-Role Orientation

A number of authors have conducted studies examining the relationship between locus of control and sex-role orientation. An external locus of control has traditionally been associated with a feminine role-orientation (Harrison, Guy and Lupfer, 1981); many research studies have had results which concur with this idea. Both Gonzalez and Williams (1981) and Minnigerode (1976), for example, found that college women who were external in their locus of control orientations tended to be sex-role stereotyped (and thus, by implication, to have a feminine role orientation). Brown (1983), looking at locus of control and sex-role orientation in a sample of 114 women graduate students, discovered that women with a nontraditional sex-role orientation had a more internal locus of control than did their traditionally-oriented counterparts. Marecek and Frasch (1977) found that college women who were externally oriented had more conservative views about female sex-roles than did the internally oriented women.

However, a few other authors who have studied the relationship between locus of control and sex-role orientation have had differing results from those of the studies discussed above. Devine and Stillion (1978) examined the effects of locus of control on traditional or liberal sex-role orientation in college students, and found no significant differences between internal and external females in their attitudes towards the role of women. Chasia and Eyo (1977) attempted a further clarification as to which sex-role orientation in women would have a stronger relationship with locus of control orientation. Their hypothesis was that "the more traditional the subjects, the higher will be the relationship

between their locus of control and sex-role orientation scores" (p. 1016). However, all relationships in this study proved to be nonsignificant.

Based on the studies summarized examining the relationship between locus of control orientation for women and their sex-role orientations, it appears that the majority of authors have found a positive relationship between an external locus of control orientation and a feminine sex-role orientation. This conclusion, however, is not unanimous. The conflicting evidence points to the need for a further examination of the relationship between these variables, which of course is a feature of this research.

Sex-Role Orientation and Self-Esteem

Several studies have examined the relationships between women's sex-role orientations and their levels of self-esteem. The results of this research have been conflicting. A number of studies (Bem, 1977; Schiff and Koopman, 1978; Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp, 1975) have found a high correlation between masculinity and positive self-esteem in women. Prager (1983) points out that self-esteem "tends to be marginally correlated at best" (p. 160) with femininity. Other studies concur with these results. Jones and Lamke (1984) found that women with a feminine role orientation had lower self-esteem than did those women who had androgynous or masculine sex-role orientations. Harrison, Guy and Lupfer (1981), when looking at the relationships between self-esteem and traditional versus nontraditional attitudes in a sample of 91 white females aged 21-60, found that the "women low in self-esteem were . . . more traditional in their attitudes towards women than were subjects high in self-esteem (p. 1180).

The findings of the above studies suggest that a feminine sex-role orientation is negatively correlated with positive self-esteem. However, the results of other research conducted using these variables do not support this conclusion. Nielsen and Edwards (1982), in a study of 87 undergraduate and graduate women, found no difference in positive self-concept between women who were feminine, neutral or masculine in their sex-role orientations. Bedeian and Zarra (1977) also found no differences in self-esteem between female undergraduates with traditional sex-role orientations and those who had nontraditional sex-role orientations. The lack of consistent findings regarding the relationship between self-esteem and sex-role orientation points to a need for further research to clarify this relationship.

Locus of Control and Self-Esteem

A few authors have examined the relationship between locus of control orientation and self-esteem. All seem to have reached the same conclusions. Ryckman and Sherman (1973) found that " women with higher self-esteem tend to be more internally oriented" (p. 1106). In a further clarification of the relationship between locus of control and self-esteem, Bedeian and Zarra (1977) found that for undergraduate college women, there was a stronger relationship between internality and self-esteem for women with nontraditional sex-role orientations than there was for women with traditional orientations.

Research Comparing Married and Single Students

A few researchers have conducted studies which compare married and single students on the variables of interest for the present study. Boor (1974) studied internal-external locus of control and marital status, sex, age and

college class on a college student sample. In this study, 15 married female subjects were matched within one year of age with 15 unmarried female subjects; 15 married male subjects were likewise matched with 15 unmarried male counterparts. The unmarried subjects proved to be more external in their locus of control orientations than were the married students. Frerichs (1973), when examining the relationship of marital status to self-esteem and internal-external control for 1435 associate degree nursing students, found that married students had higher self-esteem levels and were more internally controlled relative to their single peers. Ortman (1976) looked at the relationship between marital status and internal-external locus of control for 1190 community college students. The married students in the Ortman study were also more internal in locus of control orientation than were the single students, as had been the case in both the research of Boor and of Frerichs noted above. Nielsen and Edwards (1982) found that married women students "were decidedly more masculine oriented than single women" (p. 553). Single women in the study had "neutral or androgynous role orientation" (p. 555). Lutes (1981) compared married and single college students of "normal college age" (which, for the purposes of this study, was defined as 22 years of age or under) on a variety of variables. One of the variables examined was sex-role orientation. Lutes found that the relationships between marital status and femininity, masculinity, and androgyny were not significant.

## Summary of the Research Studies Described

A variety of research studies have been summarized. A number of main ideas are available from the review of this research. The majority of authors

studying the relationship between locus of control and sex-role orientation in women have found that an external locus of control is associated with a feminine or traditional sex-role orientation, and an internal locus of control with a more nontraditional role orientation. However, there is some conflicting research evidence regarding this conclusion. The findings regarding the relationship between sex-role orientation and self-esteem have been contradictory. Although a number of authors have noted high correlations between masculinity in women and high self-esteem, other researchers have found there to be no differences in self-esteem between women who are feminine, masculine or androgynous in their sex-role orientations. In general, internal locus of control has been associated with higher self-esteem. Importantly, some research suggests that this relationship may be stronger for women with nontraditional sex-role orientations.

There is only limited research available in which comparisons of the locus of control orientations, self-esteem and sex-role orientations of married and single students have been made. The three studies where the authors examine locus of control orientation and its relationship to marital status all reached the same conclusion. Married students do have a more internal locus of control orientation than do their single counterparts. In the one study which compared married and unmarried female students regarding self-esteem, it was found that the married students had higher self-esteem levels. There is disagreement between researchers as to the relationship between marital status and sex-role orientation. Nielsen and Edwards (1982) found married

women students to be more masculine, while Lutes (1981) found no relationship between marital status and sex-role orientation.

Specific Problems Found Within the Literature

When the research studies which have been summarized are carefully examined, a number of specific problems within this literature become evident. The most obvious problem is the lack of studies which deal with the relationship between locus of control, self-esteem and sex-role orientation in women. Only two studies in the literature (Bedeian and Zarra, 1977; Harrison, Guy and Lupfer, 1981) have done this. No study has yet compared married and single women along these dimensions. There is also conflicting evidence within the literature regarding the relationships between locus of control, self-esteem and sex-role orientation. One current area of controversy within the literature concerns the relationship between locus of control and sex-role orientation. Most investigators have found a positive relationship between an external locus of control and a feminine or sex-role stereotyped sex-role orientation, but this conclusion is not unanimous. Another problem concerns the relationship between sex-role orientation and self-esteem. The majority of researchers report that a feminine sex-role orientation is associated with lower self-esteem. However, the results of some research show no differences between the self-esteem scores of women who are feminine, masculine, or androgynous in their sex-role orientations.

There are also a number of problems evident within the literature that explicitly compares married and single college students. Results are often not broken down into data for male married students and female married students

(see Boor, 1974; Lutes, 1981; Ortman, 1976). The mean ages for married students and single students are often not specified, making it difficult to ascertain whether students within similar age groups are being compared.

## Statements of Hypotheses

Based on the review of research in the area, the hypotheses for this research study are as follows:

### Hypothesis 1

Married female undergraduates will have a more internal locus of control orientation than will single female undergraduates.

This hypothesis is based on the findings of Boor (1974), Frerichs (1973), and Ortman (1976).

### Hypothesis 2

Married female undergraduates will be higher in positive self-esteem than single female undergraduates.

The research findings of Frerichs (1973) are the basis for this hypothesis.

### Hypothesis 3

Married female undergraduates will have a different sex-role orientation than single female undergraduates.

Two of the previously summarized research studies (Lutes, 1981; Nielsen and Edwards, 1982) compared the sex-role orientations of married and single students. The results of these were conflicting. Nielsen and Edwards (1982) found married students to be different from single ones in sex-role orientation, while Lutes (1981) found no relationship between marital status and sex-role orientation. Since the research of Nielsen and Edwards focused

specifically on female students, while the study conducted by Lutes did not, the findings of the former serve as the basis for Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4

There will be differing relationships found between self-esteem, locus of control, and sex-role orientation for the married female undergraduates than for the single ones.

This hypothesis is based on the research findings of Bedeian and Zarra (1977). Bedeian and Zarra found that there were differential amounts of association between self-esteem and locus of control for individuals, depending on sex-role orientation. Given that Hypothesis 3 posits that married and single female undergraduates will differ in their sex-role orientations, and given that Bedeian and Zarra have found that the strength of the relationship between self-esteem and locus of control changes depending on sex-role orientation, the prediction is made that the relationships between locus of control, self-esteem and sex-role orientation will be different for the married group than for the single group.

# CHAPTER 3

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The sample used for the present study, the research instruments, the methods of data collection , and the methods of analysis are all described hereafter.

### The Sample

The sample was made up exclusively of female student volunteers from the University of Alberta. They were recruited through a combination of methods: soliciting personal acquaintances who fit the selection criteria; contacting other female undergraduates recommended by these persons; making requests for student volunteers in undergraduate classes; and posting bulletin board notices requesting volunteers throughout the university campus.

The sample consisted of 64 undergraduate female students from a number of faculties at the University of Alberta. In Table 1, the distribution of these students is given.

Table 1

Distribution of Subjects by Faculty

| Faculty | Married | Single | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Arts | 7 | 9 | 16 |
| Business | | 1 | 1 |
| Education | 10 | 11 | 21 |
| Home Economics | | 6 | 6 |
| Law | 1 | | 1 |
| Medicine | 2 | | 2 |
| Nursing | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Pharmacy | 1 | | 1 |
| Physical Education | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Rehabilitation Medicine | 4 | | 4 |
| Science | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 31 | 33 | 64 |

31 students in the sample were married, and 33 were single. The subjects ranged in age from 20 years of age to 25 years of age. The mean age for married students was 22.55 years. The standard deviation for this group was 1.72 years. The mean age for the single subjects was 21.45 years. The standard deviation for this group was 1.28 years. Five of the married student volunteers had one or more children. None of the single students in the research sample had children.

## Research Instruments

There were three research instruments used in the study: the Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965); the Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (I-E Scale) (Rotter, 1966); and the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1974).

### Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

The Self-Esteem Scale is a 10-item Guttman scale which measures the self-acceptance component of self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965). Silber and Tippett (1965) note that the Rosenberg scale has construct validity, since correlations ranging from .56 to .83 have been found between this scale and both ratings of client self-esteem made by clinicians and several other types of self-esteem measures. Rosenberg (1965) argues that the scale also has face validity, as there was an explicit attempt made "to select items which openly and directly dealt with the dimension under investigation" (p. 17). Rosenberg (1965) also feels that the scale has predictive validity, because people possessing positive self-esteem (as measured by the scale) have been found to be less depressed, less shy and more assertive than those with lower self-esteem. The Self-Esteem Scale has acceptable reliability. Silber and Tippet (1965) report a test-retest correlation over a two-week timespan of .88 with a sample of 28. Rosenberg (1965) reports 92% reproducibility and 72% scalability for the scale.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is self-administered, and takes about 2-3 minutes to complete. Respondents are asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with 10 items all relating to self-esteem. Scores for each item on the scale range from 1 (highest amount of self-esteem) to 4 (lowest amount of self-esteem). Half of the questions on the scale are scored at

face value. The scores of the remaining five questions are reversed before totalling, so that 1=4, 2=3, 3=2, and 4=1. The total score for a subject on this scale can thus range from 10 (highest amount of self-esteem) to 40 (lowest amount of self-esteem).

Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (I-E Scale)

The Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (I-E Scale) is a measure of generalized expectancy of reinforcement (Rotter, 1966). The I-E scale has been found to have adequate discriminant validity. Rotter (1966) notes correlations between the I-E scale and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale as ranging from .07 to -.35. Correlations between the I-E scale and measures of intelligence range from .03 to -.22. Rotter (1966) reported an overall test-retest reliability of .72 for 60 college students (30 males, 30 females) with 1 month between re-administrations. Rotter (1966) reported a Kuder-Richardson internal consistency coefficient of .70 for a group of 400 college students (200 males, 200 females) who were administered the I-E Scale.

The I-E scale consists of 29 question pairs, in a forced-choice format. Twenty-three of these pairs are used for scoring purposes. The remaining 6 are used as fillers. Internal statements are paired with external ones in the question pairs. Subjects are given 1 point for each external statement they select. Scores can range from 0 (most internal) to 23 (most external). The I-E scale is self-administered, and takes about 15 minutes to complete.

Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI)

Bem (1974) describes the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) as a sex-role inventory that characterizes "a person as masculine, feminine, or androgynous

as a function of the difference between his or her endorsement of masculine and feminine personality characteristics" (p. 155). BSRI scores have been found to correlate with scores on the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ), a similar measure of masculinity-femininity. This indicates that the BSRI has construct validity. The actual correlations between the BSRI and PAQ subscales were .75 for males and .73 for females on the masculinity subscale, and .57 for males and .59 for females on the femininity subscales (Spence and Helmreich, 1978). Bem (1974) also gives as evidence for construct validity the fact that for 2 groups of college students, males scored significantly higher than females on the masculinity scale, while college females had significantly higher scores than college males on the femininity scale. These results have been substantiated by Minnigerode (1976). Bem (1974) reports the following test-retest correlations for a group of 28 males and 28 females (all college students) who were given the BSRI four weeks after its initial administration: masculinity scores correlated .90; femininity scores correlated .90; and the androgyny scores correlated .93. Internal consistency of the BSRI was estimated using coefficient alpha for two groups of college students (n=723 and n=194, respectively). These internal consistency estimates were .86 and .86 for masculinity scores, .80 and .82 for femininity scores, and .85 and .86 for androgyny scores (Bem, 1974).

The BSRI is self-administered and takes about 15 minutes to complete. It is an adjective rating scale, consisting of 60 adjectives (twenty masculine, twenty feminine, and twenty neutral). Subjects are asked to rate themselves on each adjective on a 7-point scale, which ranges from 1 ("never or almost never

true") to 7 ("always or almost always true"). As mentioned previously, three scores come from these ratings. The masculinity score is the mean of self-ratings on the masculine adjectives. The femininity score is the mean of feminine items. Both of these scores can range from 1 to 7. The third score, the androgyny score, indicates the "relative amounts of masculinity and femininity that the person includes in his or her self-description" (Bem, 1974, p. 158). Bem (1974) suggests the following method for calculating the androgyny score. First, the masculinity score is subtracted from the femininity score. This difference is called the androgyny difference score. To approximate a t-ratio value, this difference score is then multiplied by 2.322. If $|t|>2.025$, the person can be classified as being significantly sex-typed. The larger the absolute value of the androgyny score, the more sex-typed or sex-reversed the person is judged to be. High negative scores indicate masculinity, while high positive scores indicate femininity. A score of 0 suggests that the person is totally androgynous.

## Data Collection

Data was collected by giving subjects a self-administered numbered questionnaire package to fill out. The questionnaire package consisted of the three research scales previously described, together with a personal data sheet, and a "request for study results" form (see Appendixes 1 and 2 for copies of the personal data sheet and the request for study results form). Questionnaires were given out directly to volunteers, who either filled them out right away, or within a few days.

Ethical considerations were included in the collection of the data for this study. The names and telephone numbers of volunteers were requested at the

bottom of the page of the personal data sheet of the questionnaire. However, this request immediately followed a section stating that this information would be removed prior to data analysis, and would be rematched with the questionnaire data only if there was some uncertainty regarding the questionnaire responses. This procedure satisfied ethical concerns regarding subject anonymity, since during data analysis questionnaire responses were identified only by number. The need to debrief subjects was addressed by providing them with the opportunity to complete a request form for a summary of research findings, with the summary of the approved results being sent to each of the study participants who had requested it.

## Data Analysis

The specific data of interest which were analyzed for each subject were age, marital status, self-esteem score (as measured by the Rosenberg scale), locus of control score ( as measured by the Rotter I-E scale), and femininity, masculinity and androgyny scores (as measured by the BSRI). There were four specific research questions which were addressed:

1. Is there a difference between married and single female undergraduates in locus of control orientation as measured by the Rotter I-E scale?

2. Is there a difference between married and single female undergraduates in self-esteem as measured by the Rosenberg self-esteem scale?

3. Is there a difference between married and single female undergraduates in sex-role orientation as measured by the BSRI?

4. Are the relationships between locus of control, self-esteem, and sex-role orientation scores different for married female undergraduates than they are for single ones?

To answer the first two questions, two-tailed t tests were used ($p = .05$ indicated statistical significance). For Question 3, t-ratios were computed. Question 4, which dealt with the possible patterns of relationships between the study variables, was addressed through the calculation of Pearson product-moment correlations.

# CHAPTER 4

## RESULTS

To assist the reader in the interpretation of results, a restatement of each hypothesis is provided, followed by the relevant statistical findings and appropriate conclusions.

Data for the first two hypotheses were subjected to two-tailed t-tests. T-ratios were calculated for the data for hypothesis three. Data for the fourth hypothesis was analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlations.

### Hypothesis 1

Married female undergraduates will have a more internal locus of control orientation than will single female undergraduates.

### Analysis

The mean scores and standard deviations on the Rotter I-E Scale for the two groups were calculated and are provided in Table II.

Table II

Internal-External Locus of Control Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Married and Single Groups

| | I-E Mean Scores | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Married | 9.94 | 3.90 |
| Single | 9.94 | 4.36 |

As can be seen, the means for the two groups are the same, but a small observable disparity in standard deviation exists. Therefore, the data was submitted to a t-test of significance. Results of the two-tailed t-test are presented in Table III.

Table III

Two-tailed t- test: Rotter I-E Scores

| T value | Degrees of freedom | 2-tail probability |
|---|---|---|
| -0.00 | 62 | 0.997 |

## Conclusion

It may be observed from the t-test results that there are no significant differences between the married and single female undergraduate groups as measured by the Rotter Internal-External Locus of Control scale. Thus, hypothesis one is rejected. Married female undergraduates do not have a more internal locus of control orientation than do single female undergraduates of similar age.

### Hypothesis 2

Married female undergraduates will be higher in positive self-esteem than single female undergraduates.

### Analysis

Self-Esteem Scale mean scores and standard deviations for the two groups were computed and are presented in Table IV.

### Table IV

Self-Esteem Scale Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Married and Single Groups

| | Self-Esteem Mean Score | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Married | 18.26 | 3.51 |
| Single | 18.15 | 4.21 |

As can be observed from the table, there are small differences between both the means and standard deviations for the two groups. The data was thus submitted to a t-test of significance. The results of this two-tailed t-test are depicted in Table V.

Table V

Two-tailed t- test: Self-Esteem Scale scores

| T value | Degrees of Freedom | 2-tail probability |
|---|---|---|
| 0.11 | 62 | 0.91 |

Conclusion

As can be seen from the t-test results, there are no significant differences between the married and single female undergraduate groups as measured by the Self-Esteem scale. Hypothesis two is therefore rejected. Married female undergraduates do not have higher self-esteem than do single female students of the same age group.

Hypothesis 3

Married female undergraduates will have a different sex-role orientation than single female undergraduates.

Analysis

Means and standard deviations for BSRI femininity and masculinity scores were calculated for both the married and the single groups. These statistics are represented in Tables VI and VII.

Table VI

BSRI Femininity Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Married and Single Groups

| | Femininity Mean Score | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Married | 5.12 | 0.42 |
| Single | 5.01 | 0.52 |

Table VII

BSRI Masculinity Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Married and Single Groups

| | Masculinity Mean Score | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Married | 4.84 | 0.59 |
| Single | 4.82 | 0.63 |

As can be noted, there are small observable differences in means and standard deviations between the married and single groups for both BSRI femininity and masculinity scores. To find out if these differences indicated that the two groups differed in sex-role orientation, the following procedures were carried out. First, an androgyny difference score for each group was calculated, by subtracting the mean masculinity score from the mean femininity score. The results of this procedure are depicted in Table VIII.

Table VIII

Androgyny Difference Scores for Married and Single Groups

| | BSRI-Fem | BSRI-Masc. | Androgyny Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Married | 5.12 | 4.84 | 0.28 |
| Single | 5.01 | 4.82 | 0.19 |

Next, t-ratios for these androgyny difference scores were calculated, using the procedure outlined by Bem (1974). (This was described in Chapter 3.) The t-

ratios for both groups, together with their corresponding sex-role orientation designations, are presented in Table IX.

Table IX

T-Ratios and Sex-Role Orientations for Married and Single Groups

| | T-Ratio | Sex-Role Orientation |
|---|---|---|
| Married | 0.65 | Androgynous |
| Single | 0.44 | Androgynous |

Conclusion

As is observable from the table above, both the married and the single groups have androgynous sex-role orientations as measured by the BSRI. Thus, hypothesis three is rejected. Married female undergraduates do not have a different sex-role orientation than single female undergraduates.

Hypothesis 4

There will be differing relationships found between self-esteem, locus of control, and sex-role orientation for the married female undergraduates than for the single ones.

Analysis

Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated between locus of control, self-esteem and sex-role orientation for both the married and single groups. These correlations are presented in matrix form in the following two tables.

Table X

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Matrix: Married Females

| | Self-Esteem | I-E | Sex-Role Orientation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Self-Esteem | 1.000 | -0.050 | 0.181 |
| I-E | | 1.000 | 0.291 |
| Sex-Role Orientation | | | 1.000 |

(r required for p.=.05 is 0.355)

Table XI

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Matrix: Single Females

| | Self-Esteem | I-E | Sex-Role Orientation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Self-Esteem | 1.000 | 0.218 | -0.026 |
| I-E | | 1.000 | 0.208 |
| Sex-Role Orientation | | | 1.000 |

(r required for p=.05 is 0.349)

Conclusion

As can be noted from the matrices, no correlation calculated between variables for either the single or the married groups was significant (p=.05). Hypotheses four is therefore rejected. There are no different patterns in self-esteem, locus of control, and sex-role orientation for the married female undergraduates and the single undergraduates.

Summary of Conclusions

1) Married female undergraduates do not score more internal in their locus of control orientations relative to single female undergraduates.

2) Married female undergraduates do not score higher in self-esteem than do single female undergraduates.

3) Married female undergraduates do not have a different sex-role orientation than single female undergraduates.

4) There are no differences in the correlations found between self-esteem, locus of control, and sex-role orientation for married female undergraduates than for single female undergraduates.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine possible personality parameter differences between married and single undergraduate females of normal university age. The study was conducted for two main reasons. First, possible conclusions which can be drawn based on the findings of existing related literature regarding young married female students have been conflicting. Second, research in which young married female students were the central focus is lacking at the present time.

The specific personality parameters of interest for this study were locus of control, self-esteem and sex-role orientation. The selection of these particular characteristics stems from the previous requests made in the literature for additional research using a female sample which focuses on these traits (Chasia and Eyo, 1977; Harrison, Guy and Lupfer, 1981; Marecek and Frasch, 1977). Based on the existing literature, it was postulated that, relative to their single counterparts, young married female undergraduates would be more internal in their locus of control orientation, have a more positive self-esteem, and be of a differing sex-role orientation. It was also hypothesized that the relationships between self-esteem, sex-role orientation and locus of control would be different for the married group than for the single group.

Results indicate no difference between married and single female undergraduates of normal college age for the three personality parameters measured. There was also no difference in the strength or type of relationships

found between self-esteem, sex-role orientation and locus of control for the two groups.

A number of observations can be made about the results of the present study. First, the fact that there were no differences between the single undergraduates and the married students indicates that at the very least, marriage does not appear to be having an extremely adverse effect on female students, contrary to what can be implied based on an examination of past demographic and sociological data. However, these results also fail to support the theory put forth by Bardwick (1971) that for women marriage should bring about a significant rise in self-esteem and a potential corresponding rise in masculine role orientation. Part of the discrepancy between the results of the present study and the results that would be postulated based on the writings of Bardwick may be due to the fact that Bardwick's book was published over 15 years ago. In recent years, social norms and expectations regarding the relative importance of marriage for young women have changed. It is now much more acceptable for a woman to remain single that it once was. Social norms regarding desirable sex-role orientations for women have also been changing. In recent years, an androgynous sex-role orientation has been advocated as being the most advantageous one for women (Bem, 1974; Bem, 1975; Bem, 1977; Deutsch and Gilbert, 1976). Devine and Stillion (1978) make the point that given how strongly it has been stressed that an androgynous sex-role orientation is desirable for women, and given the traditional feminine characteristic of looking to others for approval of actions, the current trend towards androgyny may not be a genuine trend, but rather a case of women

continuing to act in ways that have been pointed out by external sources as being desirable. If this is true, many women may well still be operating in a traditionally feminine way even if research instruments measuring sex-role orientation indicate that their current sex-role orientations are androgynous or masculine. This may be a partial explanation for why both groups in the current study had androgynous sex-role orientations.

The hypotheses for the research conducted were based on the findings of the limited number of studies available which compare married and single students on locus of control, self-esteem and sex-role orientation. Some of the problems with this research were mentioned previously (data not being broken down into male and single results, and mean ages of married and single groups not being specified). Only very limited numbers of studies have previously measured all three of the variables of interest for this study in a female population (Bedeian and Zarra, 1977; Harrison, Guy and Lupfer, 1981). Given the limited number of research findings available to formulate hypotheses from, the present research can be looked at as a first step only. There are still many relationships left to clarify.

## Implications for Practice and Research

The results of this study have both practical and research implications. Counselors working with a post-secondary student population could gain an awareness that marriage prior to the completion of university studies is not necessarily detrimental for female students. This knowledge could be passed along to female clients who may be hesitant about combining education and married life. For students, these findings may serve to give a feeling of freedom

of choice. Those who wish to marry may come to the conclusion that finishing their university education does not necessarily mean that a postponement of more personal, family-oriented goals will be required.

As was mentioned above, only a very limited amount of research has focused on young married female undergraduates. It is still possible that differences do exist between married and single female undergraduates. A first step for research in this area would be to try a similar study to the current research at another educational institution, to see if the present results are specific to the University of Alberta student body, or are indicative of patterns within the general female undergraduate population. Perhaps a more phenomenological approach would be more effective in ascertaining differences between these groups.

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APPENDIX 1

**PERSONAL DATA SHEET** #_____

AGE: _____

MARITAL STATUS (CHECK ONE):

_____MARRIED
_____SEPARATED/DIVORCED
_____COMMON-LAW RELATIONSHIP
_____SINGLE

DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN?_____

ARE YOU CURRENTLY REGISTERED IN AN UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA? _____

FACULTY?_____

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#_____
NAME:_____

TELEPHONE NO._____

(NOTE: Your name and telephone number will be separated from your questionnaire responses, so that your responses will be anonymous. Your name will be rematched with the questionnaire data only if there is some uncertainty about your responses and I need to doublecheck these with you.)

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY!**

# APPENDIX 2

## REQUEST FOR STUDY SUMMARY

If you would like a summary of the study results sent to you after my research is completed, please write your name and address in the space below (include your postal code):

NAME:_____

ADDRESS:_____

_____

_____

POSTAL CODE:_____